



Local Roads & Streets Council

July 2002 - 2004
Biennial Report



Partnering to improve the quality of Wisconsin's local roads and streets



Please visit the Local Roads and
Streets Council Web site at:

<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/lrsc/index.htm>

**LOCAL ROADS AND STREETS COUNCIL
REPORT TO THE SECRETARY OF THE
WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION**

July 2002–2004 Biennial Report

Dear Secretary Busalacchi:

On behalf of the Local Roads and Streets Council (LRSC), I am pleased to submit to you the Council's biennial report for the period 2002–2004.

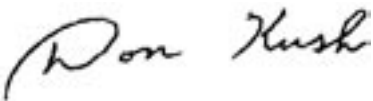
As the Council approaches its 10-year anniversary in June of 2005, the Council can look back over the past two years with a sense of accomplishment in helping to advance several initiatives for the betterment of the local roads and streets system. "The Council's continued support and promotion of pavement management tools and strategies for local units of government has helped local decision-makers improve the value of their transportation investment dollar." A monumental environmental streamlining effort by the Council to improve the coordination and efficiency of the environmental and engineering reviews of local road projects gained overwhelming support from the two sometimes adversarial interests. While failing to gain state budgetary support to implement this environmental streamlining proposal, the Council believes this initiative will warrant further consideration in the future.

The Council also weighed in on the issue of diminishing investment in the state trunk highway maintenance program and the associated "trickle down" effect on local units of government. The Council is a strong supporter of this exemplary model of a state and local partnership, and developed an educational paper to add more informative substance to the topic for legislative discussion.

In undertaking these tasks, the Council has sought to strengthen existing partnerships and to develop new ones in support of the improvement of the system of local roads and streets as an integral part of the statewide transportation system. The Council appreciates the support provided by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation in helping to maintain this successful partnership and looks forward to the next decade of partnering to improve the quality of Wisconsin's local roads and streets.

This report is respectfully submitted this 24th day of May, 2005.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Don Kush". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Don Kush, Chair

Local Roads and Streets Council

2004 LOCAL ROADS AND STREETS COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Wisconsin Towns Association

- Marilyn Bhend, Johnson-Marathon
- Arlyn Helm, Springbrook-Washburn
- Eugene Lueck, Bloomer-Chippewa
- Marv Samson, Black Creek-Outagamie

Wisconsin Counties Association

- Arlene Benrud, La Crosse County
- Dan Fedderly, Dunn County
- Dick Leffler, Florence County
- Emmer Shields, Ashland County
- Chet Zurawik, Milwaukee County

Wisconsin Alliance of Cities

- Dave Botts, Beloit
- Rick Jones, *Past Chair*, Racine
- Jeff Mantes, Milwaukee
- Paula Vandehey, Appleton

Other Participants

- Tracey McKenney, Federal Highway Administration
- Todd Pierce, Transportation Development Association

League of Wisconsin Municipalities

- Bill Beil, Abbotsford
- Bill Handlos, Manitowoc
- Dennis Melvin, West Bend
- David Waffle, *Vice Chair*, Reedsburg

Regional Planning Commissions & Metropolitan Planning Organizations

- Don Kush, Chair, West Central Wisconsin RPC
- Walt Raith, East Central Wisconsin RPC
- Ken Yunker, Southeast Wisconsin RPC

WisDOT Staff

- Mary Forlenza, *WisDOT Staff Chair*
- Rod Clark, *Director, BTLR*
- Scott Bush, *Unit Leader, Local State Programs*
- Steve Coons, *Unit Leader, Local Federal Programs*
- Susie Forde, *Data Management, DTIM*
- Joe Nestler, *Program Development and Analysis Section, DTIM*
- Bob Wagner, *Planning Supervisor, WI Rapids*

2004 LOCAL ROADS AND STREETS COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Executive

- Don Kush (RPC), *Chair & LRSC Chair*
- Mary Forlenza, (WisDOT) *Co-Chair*
- Rick Jones (WAC), *LRSC Past-Chair, Committee Chair*
- Marv Sampson (WTA) *Representative*
- Emmer Shields (WCA), *Committee Chair*
- Paula Vandehey (WAC), *Committee Chair*
- Dave Waffle (LWM), *LRSC Vice-Chair & Committee Chair*

Infrastructure Management

- Paula Vandehey (WAC), *Chair*
- Marilyn Bhend (WTA)
- Dave Botts (WAC)
- Susie Forde (WisDOT)
- Bill Handlos (LWM)
- Dick Leffler (WCA)
- Jeff Mantes (WAC)
- Steve Pudloski, UW–Transportation Information Center
- Walt Raith (RPC)
- Bob Wagner (WisDOT)

Local Transportation Funding

- Rick Jones (WAC), *Chair*
- Dan Fedderly (WCA)
- Bill Handlos (LWM)
- Don Kush (RPC)
- Dennis Melvin (LWM)
- Marv Sampson (WTA)
- Dave Waffle (LWM)

Education & Communication

- Dave Waffle (LWM), *Chair*
- Arlene Benrud (WCA)
- Arlyn Helm (WTA)
- Jeff Mantes (WAC)
- Ann Schell (RPC)

Regulatory, Environmental & Legislative

- Emmer Shields (WCA), *Chair*
- Don Kush (RPC)
- Gene Lueck (WTA)
- VACANT (LWM)
- VACANT (WAC)

Local Roads and Streets Council Overview

Wisconsin's expansive 112,000-mile road network consists of highways, local roads, and streets operated and maintained by many jurisdictions; including the state, counties, cities, villages, and towns. This integrated road system provides a high level of mobility for both residents and non-residents for their daily trips to work, school, shopping, and other routine destinations. Wisconsin's road system is also vital to the state's economy and has been identified as a major catalyst in the state's "Grow Wisconsin" economic initiative.

The focus of the Local Roads and Streets Council (LRSC) is to evaluate issues that impact this 100,000 mile local road system and make recommendations to the Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) that promote the continued preservation of a quality local road system to meet the mobility and safety needs of the traveling public, as well as contributing to the state's economic well being.

Local Roads and Streets Council Organization

The creation of the LRSC by the WisDOT Secretary in 1995 was the beginning of a decade-old partnership between state and local government representatives dedicated to improving the quality of Wisconsin's local roads and streets. The LRSC is comprised of representatives from all levels of local government, including towns, villages, cities, counties, regional planning commissions and metropolitan planning organizations, along with WisDOT.

Over time, the LRSC continues to evolve and address a broader range of issues emerging from its initial charge. For example, the Council responded to a growing emphasis on pavement management, resulting from the development of the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR) and PASERWARE data management systems, by creating the Infrastructure Management (IM) Committee. The charge of the IM Committee is to help facilitate the integration of the WISLR and PASERWARE systems, and to identify and promote best management practices for local road officials to incorporate with their data analysis to address cost-effective road improvement needs.

The current five-committee structure enables the LRSC to maximize the time and talents of members and other stakeholders.

The committees also help to ensure smooth and efficient workflow for the Council's work program initiatives. The committees and their designated focus areas include:

- Executive Committee
- Local Transportation Finance Committee
- Regulatory, Environmental and Legislative Committee
- Education and Communication Committee
- Infrastructure Management Committee

The membership of each committee reflects a cross-section of the LRSC as a whole. Each committee is comprised of at least one member from various local government associations or groups (e.g. one member from the Wisconsin Towns Association, one representing regional planning agencies, etc.). In addition, committee membership frequently extends beyond the Council to include outside stakeholders, or non-Council local government representatives with special skills or expertise that can contribute to the committee's efforts.

This report highlights the LRSC's work activities and accomplishments that have occurred during the period July 2002–2004.

Local Roads and Streets Council Accomplishments

Executive Committee

The Council's Executive Committee is comprised of the LRSC chair, vice-chair, immediate past chair, all committee chairs, and WisDOT's staff chair to the Council. This committee has continued to fulfill its role in providing leadership to the LRSC through prioritizing and directing the Council's wide array of work efforts, ensuring consistency across Council activities, and serving as a focal point for interaction with WisDOT. The Executive Committee meets with the WisDOT Secretary twice a year to update department leadership on the Council's activities and to seek input on WisDOT priorities concerning local road issues. Additional meetings with other WisDOT and other agency leadership have been conducted as necessary to ensure coordination of efforts and to maintain open lines of communication on activities and interests.

A mutual concern of the Executive Committee and the WisDOT Secretary's office has been the impact of the budget reductions from the last biennial budget cycle on the ability of WisDOT to provide adequate staff support to the Council's efforts. The Executive Committee recognizes the importance of WisDOT staffing assistance to the overall functioning and effectiveness of the Council's work activities. Secretary Busalacchi, in recognition of the importance of this state/local partnership, committed his office to the ongoing support for adequate staffing of Council activities. The confidence expressed by the Secretary in the value of the Council's work to WisDOT and the reassurance of continued WisDOT support exemplify the strengthening of state/local partnerships that are the key to a more effective and efficient public service to the residents of Wisconsin. The Executive Committee of the LRSC will continue to strive to enhance and expand this statewide model for state and local cooperative efforts.

Local Transportation Finance Committee

The LRSC's Local Transportation Finance (LTF) Committee has continued its work on issues relevant to funding local transportation projects. This work effort involves the examination of federal and state transportation budget information for its respective impact on local transportation programs, as well as addressing concerns over the distribution and effective use of local program funds. The LTF Committee continues its work to clarify the intent of the General Transportation Aids (GTA) program and efforts to help address concerns over specific transportation expenditures that are eligible for use of GTA funds by local units of government.

The Committee developed, and the Council adopted, a purpose statement for the GTA program that was intended to provide a clear, statutory understanding of the program's objective, "to help support the operation and improvement of local roads and streets." The Committee and Council believe that a purpose statement for the GTA program is needed to correct the misperception that non-transportation related expenditures are supported by GTA funding. However, lacking legislative and administrative support to codify a GTA Purpose Statement into the state statutes at this time, this initiative will continue to be reviewed for future incorporation with the GTA program.

The Local Transportation Finance Committee has also undertaken the task to develop a GTA incentive program to continually expand accountability for the use of local program funds through the use of available data and technical applications in local transportation investment decision-making. The incentive program focuses on the use of the PASER road rating system, the WISLR database and the PASERWARE pavement management

software program. The incentive program will encourage local municipalities to incorporate these tools as part of the development of their pavement management strategy to promote more cost-effective transportation investments. This committee initiative is in its early developmental stages and will be evaluated for its programmatic application.

Regulatory, Environmental and Legislative Committee

Over the past two years, the LRSC's Regulatory, Environmental and Legislative (REAL) Committee has worked cooperatively with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), WisDOT and local government associations on a proposal to improve the environmental review process and increase the effectiveness of oversight of local transportation projects. This proposal is in keeping with Governor Doyle's priority for more efficient government and will improve state agency service to local communities, while leading to new initiatives for better environmental results for municipally funded transportation improvement projects. WisDOT Secretary Busalacchi and DNR Secretary Hassett have supported the development of this proposal and invested staff resources toward this effort.

A fundamental building block of this initiative was a working conference held at UW-Stevens Point on March 25, 2003. This all-day conference, entitled Transportation and the Environment—Promoting and Protecting the Public Interest, was sponsored by the LRSC and supported by WisDOT, DNR and FHWA. Forty-five participants attended the conference from federal and state agencies, local communities, regional entities and private stakeholders representing transportation and environmental interests. The focus of the conference was to develop a new approach for the delivery of local transportation projects, while promoting environmental conservation and protecting environmental

resources. The conference produced two vital recommendations that identified the need for a single point of contact for local officials and the need for continuing education, outreach and training to ensure the continued success of this streamlining proposal.

The key to the success of this proposal is the single point of contact approach by which both the DNR and WisDOT would identify a "Local Transportation Liaison" in each region or district. This local transportation liaison would be the person responsible to coordinate their respective agency's required engineering and environmental compliance reviews and permitting of local transportation projects on the existing local road system. The liaison will have the ability to call on special expertise where it may be necessary for more complicated projects, as well as to expedite the permitting of a simplified project that may only require the application of best management practices.

The intended outcome of this proposed streamlining initiative is to consolidate the currently fragmented permitting process for local transportation projects, resulting in cost savings in both administrative time and project cost. In addition, a single point of contact for local government officials will help to foster the development of positive relationships in a sometimes confusing and adversarial regulatory process. Improving these relationships will lead to improved compliance with the environmental regulations required of local transportation projects.

A significant portion of the staffing requirements contained in the proposal can be met through some reallocation of existing DNR staff time involved in the environmental review process for local road projects. However, additional staffing will likely be required to provide adequate statewide coverage. The overall goals are to establish:

- A consolidated local transportation permit program;
- A single point of contact system within DNR and WisDOT; and
- A local transportation advisory council to the DNR.

Full implementation of these measures will require legislative approval.

In addition to this initiative, the REAL Committee has continued to stay connected with the Secretary's Committee on Local Program Streamlining (SCOLPS) and on other related environmental issues such as wetland mitigation. Both the REAL and SCOLPS Committees are interested in addressing the impacts of transportation projects on wetlands through improvements to the wetlands banking program and will continue to pursue this work effort in 2005.

The REAL Committee has also undertaken an evaluation of the impacts of oversize and overweight vehicles on the local road system. With a statewide priority on system preservation, the damage to local roads from oversize and overweight vehicles is counterproductive to the transportation investments devoted to road maintenance and improvement. An improvement to the strict enforcement of regulations concerning oversize and overweight vehicles will be the focus of the REAL Committee effort continuing into 2005.

Education and Communication Committee

The Education and Communication (E & C) Committee has continued to play a pivotal role in coordinating information and developing news articles and other educational efforts in support of the many LRSC activities. Much of the work of the E & C Committee relies on the assistance of WisDOT support staff for product finalization and delivery. This collaboration has helped to advance the communications of the LRSC to reach a broader audience in a more cost-effective

fashion. The LRSC launched a Web site in 2002 as part of WisDOT's Internet site. The LRSC homepage is: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/lrsc/index.htm>.

With the availability of this electronic media, the E & C Committee is able to expand and maximize its efforts to provide information about the Council and its activities in the timeliest manner. This Web site includes information about the Council's history with its charge by the WisDOT Secretary, its priorities, membership and committee structure, along with other relevant information and contacts. In addition, LRSC quarterly newsletters and past biennial reports are available, and the newsletter is e-mailed quarterly to more than 1,100 people statewide.

The E & C Committee has also applied itself to updating LRSC informational material for reproduction in a hard copy format for personalized distribution. One of the brochures provides an historical background for the formation of the LRSC and its organizational structure. It also provides an overview of some of the Council's accomplishments and current work efforts. The second brochure provides an overview of the GTA program and how it acts as a catalyst for local road investments, securing \$4 of local funding for transportation projects for every \$1 of GTA funding received by local units of government.

Both of these informational pieces by the E & C Committee further the charge of the LRSC to "enhance and facilitate communication" among the various state associations, WisDOT, and the general public to help foster cooperative state/local partnerships on local transportation issues and to ensure the continued efficient use of public funds. The E & C committee will continue to play a major role in supporting LRSC activities in 2005 as the Council works to provide a better level of understanding among state and local officials, the legislature and other stakeholders of the value of the local transportation system.

Infrastructure Management Committee

As the group who initially identified the need to develop a mechanism to measure pavement conditions on Wisconsin's local road system to the department, the LRSC created the Infrastructure Management (IM) Committee in 2003. This committee affords the Council a greater opportunity to provide a more directed focus on several on-going initiatives, as well as address newly emerging issues.

The IM Committee became the Council's principle contact with WisDOT programmers during the final stages of the development of the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR), and continues to provide local feedback as WISLR nears completion and training sessions on its use are being developed. Similarly, the IM committee has continued to monitor and provide local input into the updating of the PASERWARE pavement management software program being developed by the UW-Transportation Information Center as a companion user of the WISLR database.

While both of these projects have been a long time in development due to the enormous complexities involved in their design and in synchronizing their compatibilities, the Council is confident in the capabilities of the WisDOT and UW-TIC programmers to complete these projects and have them available to local road officials to facilitate the required pavement rating submittals by December 15, 2005. The availability of these two powerful pavement management tools will provide WisDOT and local officials with improved capabilities to conduct road improvement needs assessments and prioritize improvement work to maximize investment dollars.

The IM Committee has also been actively involved in the review and identification of best management practices to assist local

road officials with the cost-effective implementation of their pavement management strategies. This work activity continues the focus on improving local road management techniques that started with the application of improved data (WISLR) and use of an improved needs assessment methodology (PASERWARE). In collaboration with WisDOT, the IM Committee reached a consensus on a number of best management practices that could be applied cost-effectively by local officials to address local road improvement needs.

The IM Committee, in consultation with the E & C Committee and WisDOT, will determine the best approach to promote these management practices with local units of government. Due to the constantly evolving nature of technology and materials application, the IM Committee will continue to research and evaluate best management practices for their application to local road improvement needs.

Another on-going activity for the IM Committee has been their involvement with WisDOT's Bureau of Planning in the development of the state's long-range transportation plan, Connections 2030. Because of the Council's work with updating WisDOT's local roads database and promotion of pavement management strategies, the Council's input was considered essential for the development of the local roads element of the long-range plan. This coordination activity will continue to be a priority with the IM Committee going into 2005.

Chairman's Summary

The past two years of the Council's activities can be summarized as a period of accomplishment of work efforts and the strengthening of state and local partnerships in the transportation arena. Since its first meeting on June 20th of 1995, the Council has pursued several long-term initiatives that are finally being realized. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight those accomplishments and acknowledge the diligent work efforts that contributed to their success.

The Council's promotion of the use of the PASER road evaluation system has contributed to another extremely high rate of compliance by local municipalities for the second round of the required pavement rating submittals in 2003—95% statewide. This continued to occur despite the fact that the requirement carries no penalty for non-compliance. The high level of compliance is testament to the strong local commitment to this effort, and its potential for immediate and long-term benefits.

The Regulatory, Environmental and Legislative (REAL) Committee continues to pursue an environmental streamlining initiative that will enhance the overall efficiency of project delivery without compromising environmental quality. This extensive work effort brought together 45 participants representing local governments, state and federal agencies, regional entities and private stakeholders from the transportation and environmental communities—groups that bring a wide range of priorities and frequently conflicting interests to the table. Despite these differences, the group remains focused on developing a new approach for the delivery of local transportation projects while protecting environmental resources. Their key recommendations, including an emphasis on a single point of contact for project review and

approval, and continuing education, outreach and training for those individuals involved with the process, will require Legislative approval for full implementation.

The development of the WISLR database system and the companion PASERWARE 3.0 pavement management software program, are advancing toward completion and training schedules are being developed for users of these products. The completion of both of these projects has been prolonged due to programming difficulties both within and between the two interactive programs. Due to PASERWARE's required use of the WISLR database, the two systems are being developed together to maintain consistency and allow them to interact effectively. When completed, the application of these two integrated systems will increase the effectiveness of WisDOT and local officials in assessing pavement management needs and in establishing road improvement priorities.

The Education and Communication (E & C) Committee has also made significant contributions toward improving public awareness of the Council and its activities. The Council now has a dedicated homepage on the WisDOT Web site that provides general information about the Council and the wide range of issues in which the Council and its Committees are involved. In addition to the use of electronic media, the E & C Committee has also updated several informational brochures for public distribution and remains active in numerous outreach activities.

What cannot be emphasized strongly enough in highlighting the Council's accomplishments over the past two years is the active participation of the Council and Committee members, and in particular, the highly dedicated and professional staff assistance provided by WisDOT in support

of the Council's activities. While position reductions and operating cuts over the past couple of years have at times strained WisDOT staff resources, Secretary Busalacchi and his office have committed their on-going support for adequate staffing of Council activities. As this partnership continues to strengthen and grow, others have been formed through changing membership on the Council and work efforts that have involved other agencies and participants. While we have said goodbye to some long time members, the Council has been fortunate to receive new members with new ideas and energy, and the same commitment to improving the quality of Wisconsin's local roads and streets.

While highlighting the accomplishments of the work completed, I would be remiss to overlook the importance of the on-going work activities of the Council and its Committees. The Council continues to be actively involved in several work efforts that will become increasingly important to state and local officials who are trying to stretch fewer dollars to meet road improvement needs. The LTF Committee will continue to examine the GTA Program and the supporting role it plays in funding local roads and streets. The LTF Committee is also evaluating a possible incentive program to encourage local municipalities to advance their expertise in pavement management through the application of improved technology and best management practices.

The IM Committee is also continuing to work on and refine those best management practices that best fit the needs of local municipalities. The IM Committee will continue to serve as the primary coordinator for the Council's input on local road and street issues for WisDOT's long-range plan—Connections 2030. In addition to wetland issues, the REAL Committee will continue to evaluate and provide input on the issue of damage to roads caused by oversized and overweight trucks.

As the Council approaches its 10-year anniversary in 2005, we can look back on the past biennium with a sense of pride and accomplishment in the Council's work to-date and a growing feeling of confidence in the service provided by the Council to both state and local officials. The greatest issue the Council and WisDOT will face going forward into the next biennium will be the unknown fiscal impacts of the federal and state budget deliberations and their trickle down effect. I am, however, confident that the Local Roads and Streets Council, in partnership with WisDOT and others, can continue to provide the analytical expertise and consensus-building platform on local road issues to face the challenges ahead.